

IMPORTING A POPULATION

BY EDWARD P. IRWIN,
In the Pacific Monthly

(Concluded)

Russians Refuse to Work.

But the Russians simply sat down beside their bundles and refused to move on. They constructed rude tents of quilts, pieces of matting, old boards, sheet-iron and anything else that would serve the purpose, and established themselves in camp as if they expected to remain there the rest of their lives. They still refuse to work on the plantations, though some of them are working as stevedores along the waterfront. They get their food in any way they can, by begging, stealing, picking wild fruit in the mountains. Many of the women have taken to prostitution as a means of making a living, and the moral condition of the camp is so unsavory that at the present time the Federal grand jury is making a thorough investigation with a view to trying to find grounds for the commencement of deportation proceedings.

The Russians were led by a man named Vasilieff, apparently a professional agitator. He it was at first that kept them from accepting the terms offered by the plantations. In the hope that with him out of the way, the immigrants might see the light, the authorities had Vasilieff arrested on a charge of vagrancy and sent to jail for three months.

This brought about the climax of the Russian trouble, for as soon as they knew their leader was behind the bars, the whole Russian contingent, consisting of about 600 men, women and children, besieged the police station and demanded in threatening tones that Vasilieff be brought out and turned over to them. The police, of course, refused and ordered the Russians to disperse. They refused, and the fire hose was brought into play. This broke up their ranks somewhat, and then the police, mounted and on foot, charged with drawn clubs.

Dispersed by Police.

Evidently expecting such a charge, the Russians had crowded all their women and children up in front and the men hid behind them, probably thinking that the police would not charge through the helpless crowd. But they were mistaken. Before they knew what was happening the clubs of the officers were descending on their heads. The men grabbed up their children and held them out at arms' length in front of the horses, thinking that this would stop the rush. But it didn't. The Russians were thoroughly clubbed and in a minute the whole 600 were on the dead run for their camp.

This was rough work, but it was undoubtedly the only way to deal with the situation, for fair words only more

thoroughly convinced them that the authorities were afraid of them.

But, though the clubs of the police have given the immigrants a more wholesome respect for the power of the law, the Russians have not been imbued with any overwhelming desire to go to the plantations. Some of them have drifted away, it is true, but most of them are still living in their rude camp and on the country. Russian immigration as a solution of the labor problem of Hawaii would be a huge joke if the joke were not on the community.

But the story of the Russian has reached beyond the limits of the Island Territory, and it is reported that many of the members of Congress are beginning to look askance at assisted immigration as a means of populating the Hawaiian Islands. Other States and Territories are not allowed to practice the system of inducing a population that is in vogue in Hawaii, and there is no good reason why Hawaii should be permitted to smother her civilization beneath the scum of the earth under the pretense of creating a real American citizenship.

Hope for the Future.

The abrogation of the special privilege under which the sugar planters of Hawaii have been obtaining the labor for the fields will hurt them temporarily, perhaps. But the good effects will without doubt more than counterbalance any loss caused by the prohibition of assisted immigration.

In all probability few if any of the planters are conscious of the fact that the pouring into the country of a constant stream of the ignorant, the diseased and the morally infected must, in the end, injure both themselves and the Territory. The sugar-planters are no different from other business men, except that, perhaps, they are as a class rather more conscientious than capitalists in other and more sophisticated communities. But they have been looking through the wrong end of the telescope; they have lost their perspective and they have not profited by the experience of other countries and of other parts of the United States. In common with capital almost everywhere, they believe that cheap labor will increase their profits, forgetting that cheaply-paid labor invariably does poor work.

Solution of the Problem.

There is a way to solve the labor problem of this most isolated of Territories, and if foreign immigration assisted by the planters and the Territory is shut out, Hawaii must inevitably choose that way for lack of any other and worse method.

In many of the States of the Union are thousands of men who are land-hungry, who would jump eagerly at the

chance to make for themselves homes in a country where the soil is of unexampled richness, where the climate is perfection, where there are no scorching summers and freezing winters. There are many thousands of men working harder on the farms of the Middle Western States than do the Japanese, Spaniards and Porto Ricans on the sugarcane plantations of Hawaii.

An army of these men could be obtained for Hawaii, if the plantations would but pay a fair wage for a fair day's work. But they would want more than that: they would want some assurances of being able in time to buy land for themselves and make their homes.

Fortunately, this may be possible soon. There is a bill now pending before Congress—probably by the time this is published it will have become law—amending the Organic Act under which the Territory of Hawaii was created. This bill contains a provision, strongly urged by Governor Frear of Hawaii and approved by the Legislature of the Territory, amending the Territorial land laws so that more of the Government land can be thrown open to bona fide homesteaders in such a way that it cannot be grabbed up by speculators and the plantation interests as soon as it is patented.

Under this change in the laws, the Government of the Territory will have something to offer to white American settlers. But most of the crops raised commercially in Hawaii require two or

three years to yield a return. In addition it takes time and money to clear the land and prepare it for sowing. The average homesteader has usually none too much money, and he must be able to make a decent living while he is waiting for the fruition of his efforts.

The plantations can easily offer him the chance to earn this living, if they will. Wages, it is true, will have to be raised, but who can honestly contend that true prosperity lies in low wages? The conditions of life among the plantation laborers will have to be improved, but that is not liable to ruin the country. Americans are not proud of squalor, ignorance and long hours of labor.

The military and naval operations now in progress in Hawaii insure the strategic importance of the Islands. The bringing in of an army of American laborers, farmers and homesteaders will insure the commercial and economic importance of the Territory and in time fit it for statehood. It may break up the baronial estates; communities of American farmers may in time take the place of the wretched hamlets of Oriental and other serfs that now till the fields; but who shall say that this will not work to the advantage, not only of the community at large, but also of the very interests that now tremble at the thought of an American invasion?

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